

## Bird observations on Wasini Island, Kenya

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During four visits of one to three days duration to Wasini Island in April 1985, November 1985, March 1986 and July 1987, birds inhabiting the various habitats were noted. Some of these observations extend the range of species as defined by Lewis & Pomeroy in their *Bird atlas of Kenya* (1989, Rotterdam: Balkema); the island occupies QSD 114C.

### Study site

Wasini Island lies at 4°40S, 39°20E at the southern extreme of the Kenyan coast, a few kilometres from the Tanzanian border, and is separated from the Kenyan mainland by the 1.5-km-wide Shimoni Channel along its northern shore. It is a low-lying island, less than 20 m at its highest point—Ras Zinza Mkono—at the easternmost promontory. It is 430 ha in area, measuring about 5 km east to west and 0.8 to 1.5 km north to south (Fig. 1).

The southern shore of Wasini Island forms the northern extent of the Kisite/Mpunguti Marine National Park. North, east and west coasts are mostly bounded by undercut coral cliffs, while the remaining shores are of lower and less sheer elevation.

The island has two small settlements, both facing the mainland, on the northern shore—Wasini at the western end and Mkwiro close to the eastern end. The limited water supply, in the form of a rain cistern near each village, which become dry during prolonged dry spells, and the thinness of the soil accounts for the small human population on the island. There are also scattered groves of coconut palms, including many dead trunks.

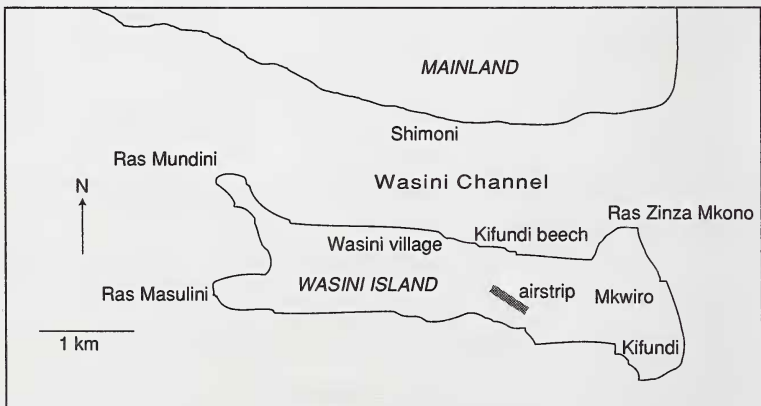


Figure 1. Map of Wasini Island

## Habitat types and avifauna

Though a detailed botanical survey was not carried out, some general observations on stand types were made so that several distinct habitats were discernible. These are presented below along with selected bird observations while a full species list is given in Table 1.

**Tidal flats:** All shores except the exposed eastern end had wide areas of exposed and muddy tidal flats which provided feeding areas for waders and herons.

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*** both white and dark phases were common.

**Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*** observed on all visits.

**Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*** one was seen on 6 April 1985 feeding to the south of the island.

**Mangrove swamp:** the most sheltered shores, W to SW, supported a zone of dense mangrove swamp, some trees being of considerable girth.

**Dwarf woodland:** the exposed eastern end of the island was covered by a dense growth of relatively intact bush and dry dwarf woodland, containing *Pandanus kirkii* and *Euphorbia nyikae* as well as other species that were similar to those still found in some parts of the mainland coast.

**Ashy Flycatcher *Muscicapa caerulescens*** two birds seen on 21 July 1987.

**Little Purple-banded Sunbirds *Nectarinia bifasciata*** numerous.

**Secondary forest and baobabs:** remnants of past forest took the form of one or two small patches of degraded secondary growth on the north edge and baobab trees, larger specimens being concentrated mainly in the N and W and more stunted ones in the SE.

**Brown-headed Parrot *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus*** between ten and twenty were seen roosting in large baobabs at the western end near Wasini Village, on all visits. Some were seen flying in at dusk from the mainland to the north. Breeding was suspected as some parrots occupied holes in baobabs during April 1985.

**Mottle-throated Spinetail *Telacanthura ussheri*** two seen feeding near baobabs at SE of island on 22 Nov 1985.

**Böhm's Spinetail *Neafrapus boehmi*** one was observed flying along the edge of remnant forest on 6 April 1985.

**Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*** two were seen on 23 Nov 1985.

**Silvery-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes brevis*** seen in forest remnants and also flying across the Shimoni Channel from the mainland.

**Green Barbet *Buccanodon olivaceum*** a lone bird was seen on 6 April 1985 in a small patch of secondary growth, which certainly could not support a viable breeding population. Either this was a surviving remnant or had flown 1.5 km from the forest patches on the mainland where the species was still frequent at that time.

**Mosque Swallow** *Hirundo senegalensis* common feeding over much of the island and a pair were seen nesting in a hole in a bough of a baobab on 22 Nov 1985.

**Red-capped Robin Chat** *Cossypha natalensis* recorded on 1 March 1985 and July 1987.

**Scrub:** most of the central region was covered in low mixed *Lantana*-dominated scrub interspersed with patches of higher indigenous bush and small trees. This contained good numbers of the various sunbird species recorded.

**White-browed Scrub Robin** *Cercothrichas leucophrys* two seen on 20 and 21 July 1987 in the arid scrub on coral rag at the western end appeared to be of the white-winged form, though this is well south of the recognised range of this race.

**Spectacled Weaver** *Ploceus ocularis* recorded on several visits plus a number of unoccupied nests suggested breeding on the island.

**Dry grassland:** in the centre of the island is a disused landing strip which, though partially invaded by *Lantana*, provided the only tract of dry grassland.

**Senegal Plover** *Vanellus lugubris* a group of five were seen on 22 Nov 1985.

### **Additions to *A bird atlas of Kenya***

Wasini Island is situated in QSD 114C of *A bird atlas of Kenya* of Lewis & Pomeroy (1989). These observations extend the range or update records of some of the species seen.

**Revival of old records** Rattling Cisticola (21 July 1987), Winding Cisticola (22 Nov 1985, 21 July 1987), Tawny-flanked Prinia (6 April 1985, 21 July 1987).

**Extensions of range** Brown Snake Eagle (20 July 1987), Great Sparrowhawk (23 Nov 1985), Harlequin Quail (21 July 1985), Sanderling (6 April 1985), Little Stint (6 April 1985), Broad-billed Sandpiper (6 April 1985), Lesser Black-backed Gull (6 April 1985), Eurasian Bee-eater (23 Nov 1985), White-browed Scrub Robin (20 and 21 July 1987), Bare-eyed Thrush (22 Nov 1985), Richard's Pipit (21 July 1987), Red-checked Cordonbleu (6 April 1985).

**Extension of suspected breeding range** Brown-headed Parrot (in nest-holes 6 April 1985), Spectacled Weaver (empty nests 23 Nov 1985).

Table 1. *Species observed on Wasini Island; habitats in which observed and estimate of frequency*

**Habitats:** CZ = coastal zone; MS = mangrove swamp; TF = tidal flats; DG = dry grassland; OF = overflying; SG = secondary growth/forest remnant; B = baobabs; SC = scrub; DW = dwarf woodland; ST = settlements.

**Frequency:** S = Scarce (only 1 or 2 birds); O = occasional (small numbers);

R = regular (moderate numbers); F = frequent (common). **Status:** Palaearctic migrants marked \*

Long-tailed Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i> .....	MS; R
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i> .....	TF; F
Black-headed Heron <i>A. melanocephala</i> .....	TF, DG; F
Green-backed Heron <i>Butorides striatus</i> .....	MS; F
Great White Egret <i>Egretta alba</i> .....	TF; R
Black Heron <i>E. ardesiaca</i> .....	TF; O
Little Egret <i>E. garzetta</i> .....	TF; F
African Reef Heron <i>E. gularis</i> .....	TF; O
Woolly-necked Stork <i>Ciconia episcopus</i> .....	MS; O
Yellow-billed Stork <i>Mycteria ibis</i> .....	TF; R
Hadada <i>Bostrychia hagedash</i> .....	TF,MS,DG; F
Sacred Ibis <i>Threskiornis aethiopica</i> .....	TF; F
Palm-nut Vulture <i>Gypohierax angolensis</i> .....	SC/OF; R
Brown Snake Eagle <i>Circaetus cinereus</i> .....	SC,SG; S
Great Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i> .....	SG; S
African Goshawk <i>A. tachiro</i> .....	SG; O
Tawny Eagle <i>Aquila rapax</i> .....	SC; S
Lizard Buzzard <i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i> .....	SC,SG; O
Fish Eagle <i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i> .....	CZ; F
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i> .....	ST; F
Bat Hawk <i>Machieramphus alcinus</i> .....	SC/OF; S
*Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> .....	CZ; S
Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i> .....	CZ; S
Harlequin Quail <i>Coturnix delegorguei</i> .....	DG; S
Crested Francolin <i>Francolinus sephaena</i> .....	SC, SG; F
*Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> .....	TF; F
*Great Sandplover <i>C. leschenaultii</i> .....	TF; F
*Mongolian Sandplover <i>C. mongolus</i> .....	TF; F
*Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> .....	TF; F
Senegal Plover <i>Vanellus lugubris</i> .....	DG; O
*Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> .....	RS; F
*Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> .....	TF; F
*Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i> .....	TF; F
*Marsh Sandpiper <i>T. stagnatilis</i> .....	TF; O
*Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i> .....	TF; O
*Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i> .....	TF; O
*Curlew Sandpiper <i>C. ferruginea</i> .....	TF; F
*Little Stint <i>C. minuta</i> .....	TF; O
*Broad-billed Sandpiper <i>Limicola falcinellus</i> .....	TF; S

continued

*Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> .....	RS; R
Crab Plover <i>Dromas ardeola</i> .....	TF; R
Water Thicknee <i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i> .....	MS,SC; F
*Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i> .....	CZ,ST; O
Sooty Gull <i>L. hemprichii</i> .....	CZ; F
Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i> .....	CZ; O
Lesser Crested Tern <i>S. bengalensis</i> .....	CZ; R
*Caspian Tern <i>S. caspia</i> .....	CZ; O
Roseate Tern <i>S. dougallii</i> .....	CZ; R
Sooty Tern <i>S. fuscata</i> .....	CZ; R
*Common Tern <i>S. hirundo</i> .....	CZ; R
White-cheeked Tern <i>S. repressa</i> .....	CZ; O
Ring-necked Dove <i>Streptopelia capicola</i> .....	SC; F
Red-eyed Dove <i>S. semitorquata</i> .....	SG; R
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove <i>Turtur chalcophilus</i> .....	SC,DG; F
Tambourine Dove <i>T. tympanistris</i> .....	SG; S
Green Pigeon <i>Treron australis</i> .....	SG,BB; O
Brown-headed Parrot <i>Poicephalus cryptoxanthus</i> .....	BB; F
Didric Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i> .....	SC; O
*Eurasian Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i> .....	SC; S
Yellowbill <i>Ceuthmochares aereus</i> .....	SG; S
White-browed Coucal <i>Centropus superciliosus</i> .....	SC; F
Slender-tailed Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus clarus</i> .....	SC; R
Little Swift <i>Apus affinis</i> .....	SC,OF; R
Palm Swift <i>Cypsiurus parvus</i> .....	SC,SG,MS; F
Böhm's Spinetail <i>Neafrapus boehmi</i> .....	SG; S
Mottle-throated Spinetail <i>Telacanthura ussheri</i> .....	BB; S
Speckled Mousebird <i>Colius striatus</i> .....	SC; F
Pied Kingfisher <i>Ceryle rudis</i> .....	TF; R
Mangrove Kingfisher <i>Halcyon senegaloides</i> .....	MS; O
*Eurasian Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i> .....	SC; S
Carmine Bee-eater <i>M. nubicus</i> .....	SC; O
Little Bee-eater <i>M. pusillus</i> .....	SC; R
Magagascar Bee-eater <i>M. superciliosus</i> .....	SC,MS; O
Lilac-breasted Roller <i>Coracias caudata</i> .....	SC; R
*Eurasian Roller <i>C. garrulus</i> .....	SC; S
Broad-billed Roller <i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i> .....	SG; S
Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i> .....	DG; S
Silvery-cheeked Hornbill <i>Bycanistes brevis</i> .....	SG; F
Crowned Hornbill <i>Tockus alboterminatus</i> .....	SC,SG; R
Green Barbet <i>Buccanodon olivaceum</i> .....	SG; S
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird <i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i> .....	SG; S
Lesser Honeyguide <i>Indicator exilis</i> .....	SG; S
Flappet Lark <i>Mirafraga rufocinnamomea</i> .....	DG; R
Striped Swallow <i>Hirundo abyssinica</i> .....	DG,SC; R
Ethiopian Swallow <i>H. aethiopica</i> .....	SC,ST; F
*Eurasian Swallow <i>H. rustica</i> .....	DG,SC,ST; R
Mosque Swallow <i>H. senegalensis</i> .....	SC,ST,BB; R
Drongo <i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i> .....	SC,SG,ST; R



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African Golden Oriole <i>Oriolus auratus</i> .....	SG; S
Black-headed Oriole <i>O. larvatus</i> .....	SG; O
*Golden Oriole <i>O. oriolus</i> .....	SG; S
Pied Crow <i>Corvus albus</i> .....	SC,ST; O
Zanzibar Sombre Greenbul <i>Andropadus importunus</i> .....	SC; O
Common Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i> .....	SC,SG,ST; F
White-browed Scrub Robin <i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i> .....	SC; S
White-browed Robin Chat <i>Cossypha heuglini</i> .....	SC; O
Red-capped Robin Chat <i>C. natalensis</i> .....	SG; O
Bare-eyed Thrush <i>Turdus tephronotus</i> .....	SC; S
Grey-backed Camaroptera <i>Camaroptera brachyura</i> .....	SC,SG; F
Rattling Cisticola <i>Cisticola chiniana</i> .....	SC; O
Winding Cisticola <i>C. galactotes</i> .....	SC; O
Tawny-flanked Prinia <i>Prinia subflava</i> .....	SC,DG; R
Pale Flycatcher <i>Bradornis pallidus</i> .....	SC; R
Ashy Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa caerulescens</i> .....	DW; S
*Spotted Flycatcher <i>M. striata</i> .....	SC; F
Paradise Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i> .....	SG; R
Richard's Pipit <i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i> .....	DG; R
African Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla aguimp</i> .....	TF,ST; F
Black-backed Puffback <i>Dryoscopus cubla</i> .....	SG; S
Tropical Boubou <i>Lanius ferrugineus</i> .....	SC; O
*Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i> .....	SC; R
*Red-tailed Shrike <i>L. isabellinus</i> .....	SC; S
Black-breasted Glossy Starling <i>Lamprotornis corruscus</i> .....	SG,BB
Collared Sunbird <i>Antheptes collaris</i> .....	SC,SG; R
Little Purple-banded Sunbird <i>Nectarinia bifasciata</i> .....	SC,SG,MS,DW; F
Olive Sunbird <i>N. olivacea</i> .....	SG; R
Mouse-coloured Sunbird <i>N. veroxii</i> .....	SC,DW; O
Pin-tailed Whydah <i>Vidua macroura</i> .....	DG; O
Spectacled Weaver <i>Ploceus ocularis</i> .....	SC; R
Grey-headed Sparrow <i>Passer griseus</i> .....	SC,DG; F
Red-billed Firefinch <i>Lagonosticta senegala</i> .....	DG; O
Red-cheeked Cordonbleu <i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i> .....	DG; O
Bronze Mannikin <i>Lonchura cucullata</i> .....	DG,SC; R
Total number of species = 123	
Number of Palearctic species = 26	

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